

What is claimed is:

1. A method of making a laminate comprising the steps of:
 - providing a hide;
 - providing a backing material;
 - moving at least one of said hide and said backing material into engagement with one another; and
 - adhesively bonding said hide and said backing material to one another thereby forming a laminate.
2. The method of claim 1 further comprising a step of applying an adhesive to at least one of said hide and said backing material for bonding said backing material to said hide.
3. The method of claim 1 further comprising a step of compressing said laminate to enhance adhesion of said backing material to said hide.
4. The method of claim 3 further comprising a step of providing a pair of rollers having a nip therebetween for compressing said laminate, and wherein said step of moving at least one of said hide and said backing material into engagement with one another includes feeding said hide and said backing material between said rollers.
5. The method of claim 1 wherein after the step of adhesively bonding, further comprising a step of cutting said backing material for separating said backing material from a supply thereof.

6. The method of claim 1 further comprising a step of providing said backing material including a layer of adhesive disposed on a side thereof for bonding said backing material to said hide.
7. The method of claim 6 further comprising providing said backing material having a layer of release material removably bonded to said adhesive.
8. The method of claim 7 further comprising the step of removing said release material from said adhesive prior to engaging said backing material with said hide.
9. The method of claim 8 wherein after the step of removing said release material, further comprising a step of providing a roller for collecting said release material thereon.
10. The method of claim 2 wherein prior to the step of moving, further comprising a step of providing means for applying an adhesive to at least one of said hide and said backing material.
11. The method of claim 1 further comprising a step of capturing at least one areal image of a portion of said hide.
12. The method of claim 11 further comprising a step of processing image data representing said areal image for identifying defects in said hide.

13. The method of claim 11 further comprising a step of processing image data representing said areal image for determining a periphery of at least a portion of said hide.

14. The method of claim 11 further comprising a step of processing image data representing said areal image for determining a surface quality of said hide.

15. The method of claim 11 further comprising a step of combining said at least one areal image so as to form a composite image of a portion of said hide.

16. The method of claim 15 further comprising a step of processing image data representative of said composite image for identifying at least a portion of the periphery of said hide.

17. The method of claim 15 further comprising a step of nesting a pattern piece with respect to said composite image.

18. The method of claim 17 further comprising a step of cutting said pattern piece from said laminate in accordance with said step of nesting.

19. The method of claim 18 wherein said step of nesting includes nesting a plurality of pattern pieces defining a marker and said step of cutting said pattern piece from said laminate occurs generally simultaneously with said step of nesting.

20. A method of making a laminate comprising the steps of:
 providing a hide;
 providing a backing material having a layer of adhesive disposed on a side thereof;
 moving at least one of said hide and said backing material into engagement with one another so that said layer of adhesive is adjacent said hide;
 compressing said laminate and adhesively bonding said hide and said backing material together forming a laminate.
21. The method of claim 20 further comprising a step of cutting pattern pieces from said laminate.
22. An apparatus for forming a laminate comprising:
 a first support surface for carrying at least one layer of work material;
 a second support surface located adjacent said first support surface;
 means for transferring said work material between said first and second support surfaces;
 a roll of backing material rotatably and operably positioned relative to said first and second support surfaces so that during movement of said work material between said first and second support surfaces said backing material can be fed from said roll into engagement with a surface defined by said work material to form said laminate.
23. The apparatus as defined in claim 22 further comprising means for applying an adhesive to at least one of said work material and said backing material for bonding said backing material to said work material.

24. The apparatus as defined in claim 23 further comprising means for compressing said laminate for bonding said backing material to said work material.

25. The apparatus as defined in claim 23 further comprising a pair of rollers coupled to said second support surface for rotation relative thereto, said rollers having a nip therebetween and positioned generally perpendicular to the movement of said work material between said first and second support surfaces such that said laminate can be passed between said rollers for compressing said laminate.

26. The apparatus as defined in claim 22 wherein said roll of backing material includes a layer of adhesive disposed on a surface defined by said backing material for bonding said backing material to said work material.

27. The apparatus as defined in claim 22 wherein said work material is a hide.

28. The apparatus as defined in claim 22 wherein said backing material includes foam.

29. The apparatus as defined in claim 26 wherein said roll of backing material further comprises a release material removably bonded to said layer of adhesive for preventing said adhesive from adhering to said backing material on said roll.

30. The apparatus as defined in claim 29 further comprising means for collecting said release material following removal thereof from said backing material.

31. The apparatus as defined in claim 22 further comprising means for feeding said backing material between said first and second support surfaces for engagement with said work material.

32. The apparatus as defined in claim 22 further comprising means for separating said backing material from said roll thereof following engagement of said backing material with said work material.

33. The apparatus as defined in claim 22 further comprising at least one guide roller adjacent to said backing material for facilitating engagement of said backing material with said work material.

34. The apparatus as defined in claim 22 further comprising a controller in communication with said first and second support surfaces for controlling the operation thereof.

35. The apparatus as defined in claim 34 further comprising means for scanning said work material movably coupled to one of said first and second support surfaces.

36. The apparatus as defined in claim 35 further comprising means for cutting pattern pieces from said laminate movably coupled to said second support surface.